

THE VITAL TOUCH

VICTOR B. SOUTHWORTH

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1902





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1902

BEQUEST OF

ALBERT ADSIT CLEMONS

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To Sarah Adair Clemens
from the authors

Victor E. Southworth

The Vital Touch



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Be lavish of thy joy
And sing, tho' all unheard,
Content with thy own minstrelsy
As sings the bird.

V. E. S.

The Vital Touch

By
Victor E. Southworth
"



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Albert Adsit Clemons
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Dedicated to My Wife

*My pride it is, my joy it is,
My manhood's surest test,
To love you much, to love you more,
To love you last and best.*

*Come any day, come any place,
My soul is satisfied
To find in love of what you are,
Its constant joy and pride.*

*There is no price I would not pay
For the joy that fills my heart to-day.*

*No task so hard I would not do
For the love of what I find in you.*

*No loss so great, no grief so sad,
But the thought of you will make me glad.*

Author's Note

The Vital Touch has brought the author to a consciousness that there is but one life in the midst of which souls exist as perfect centers of action. The infinite objectivity which we call the universe is the eternal playmate and bosom friend of the infinite subjectivity which we call the soul. The realization of this truth is what the author calls *The Vital Touch*.

V. E. S.



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The Vital Touch



My Symphony

TO KNOW the power within,
To meet the world in love,
To cherish for mankind a boundless hope,
To hold divine relationship with all that is,
To have the mind a perfect instrument,
To make wise use of every circumstance,
And to be all I am in all I do:
Such is the perfect life of man.

At Ebbentide



LONG with joy my eyes have feasted
On the beauty of the day,
Knowing well such sunlit comfort
Cannot stay.

Now I turn to feast as deeply
On the beauty of the night,
Equal beauty that the darkness
Brings to light.

Not alone the bright sun loves me,
Not alone the day is dear ;
Full as friendly come the shadows
Creeping near.

So this dream we call our life time,
Full of beauty as it seems,
Passeth into other beauties—
Other dreams.

A Quiet Heart



IN VAIN beyond the present day
By some remote and untried way
We urge our quest
After the best.

Looking afar in hope to find
What we perchance have left behind
In ample store
At our own door.

The best is near, already ours,
If we would wisely use the powers
Of mind and heart
And do our part.

Complete and fair the earth will be
For him whose inner majesty
Crowns every sight
With its own light.

In any place we find the thing
That in our hearts the power we bring
To see and use,
All else we lose.

Duty



UTY is but the power to do.

Who feels the need and conscious is of power
Must rise to act,

With not one thought but that occasion leads
the way

And I am strong.

There is no skill that does not bind to use.

I must be all I am in all I do ;

So flowers the plant,

So stars in heaven are bright,

So seasons circle on,

So life ascends.

The power within must full expression gain—

Such is the need supreme, the law of life.

Each must be free to live in truth unto himself ;

No fear to check,

No gain to lure him on,

His mind unbought,

Each act his very own without reserve—

And so, and to the end, will life advance.

To the Dear Earth



MAY it be mine to live close unto thee
With open mind in tender sympathy,
To feel all that I am with thee akin,
All outward life one with the life within.

May it be mine to love all things that live,
And cherish wisely what return they give.
I would not hold the meanest in disdain,
Nor think that any spends itself in vain.

Amid the world of forms that cannot stay,
It were enough, if by each common way
I could discern with ever deep'ning sight
Abounding good and wisdom infinite.

No more I ask than never to pass by
The good of things that close about me lie;
Never, with eyes fixed on some mystic star,
To miss the glory of the things that are.

The Vision



NO SIMPLE, common thing
Do thou disdain,
Nor call thou aught unclean,
Nor treat as vain.

Each life begins and ends,
Whate'er it be,
In the same boundless source
That dwells in thee.

Naught ever hopeless is,
Since all is one,
From tiny water-mote
To distant sun.

Holy and wonderful,
Each earthly clod,
If thou the vision seest—
All things in God.

The Song of My Heart



I could but say what fills my heart,
Or if I its song could sing,
'Twould be of the joys the days impart
As they pass on noiseless wing.

I would sing the glories that abide
In the always now and near,
Treasures of beauty on every side—
The heavenly world of here.

I would sing the greatness of the soul,
Of the free and fearless mind;
I would sing of patient self-control,
And of noble deeds and kind.

I would sing of toil that fills our days
With the sense of manly worth;
I would sing the happiness we find
And the dear old comrade—Earth.

I would sing the happiness we find
In the drawing near of friends;
Of the intercourse of mind with mind,
And of love that never ends.

Erratum

Fourth verse on page 17 should read:

I would sing of toil that fills our days
With the sense of manly worth:
I would sing of sane and simple ways,
And the dear old comrade—Earth.

I would sing how sorrow quickens love,
How sympathy unites us,
How the weight of care 'neath which we move
With added strength requites us.

I would sing of dreams, the soul's ideals,
And visions that come thronging,
Of the ecstasy the spirit feels,
Of deep and holy longing.

I would sing of death with cheerful heart
And of things not understood,
For I know they are of life a part
And can only lead to good!

The Greatness of Love



ALL my youthful days I fancied
I saw plainly truth and right,
Dreamed, to me, life's wondrous meaning
Stood revealed in clearest light;
Now I know I see but dimly
Half the glory of the truth;
Put aside are childish fancies,
Vanished far the dreams of youth.

Now beyond my boldest vision
Signs of what shall be I trace,
When no more by weakness hindered
I shall see as face to face.
I have gained a higher wisdom,
Time has brought a faith profound,
Steadfast now my hope abideth,
Since by love my life is crowned.

What avail the words of angels,
What avail the tongues of men,
What the gift of prophesying,
What our learning's farthest ken,
What the faith that moveth mountains,
What can charity secure,
What tho we may die as martyrs,
Without love our souls are poor.

Love endureth, hopeth all things,
Love seeks not its own to gain,
Turns with all the more compassion
Unto those who give us pain.
'Mid the doubts that mock our knowledge,
'Mid the clamor of our creeds,
There abides our surest safety
In the love of kindly deeds.

The Dawn



WHEN we have lingered long enough in sleep
And through the chambers of this shut-in life
The great awakening light sets all astir,
I wonder will not Death reveal itself
A friendlier thing than thus to sleep and dream?

When sleep is gone will not our dreams remain?
Will we not marvel how so long with fear
We pulled the curtain close to keep away the dawn,
And did our best not to be roused so soon?

I sometimes think a tender mother leaves us now to sleep
Who then will wake us, saying, "'Tis day, my child."

Contentment



OME stay at home with me,
Nor vainly hope to see
A better day.
Cling stoutly to the real,
Nor seek for the ideal
So far away.

There is no life unclean,
No useless thing or mean
To natures fine.
All have their place to fill,
And, high or low, they thrill
With power divine.

So put thy dream aside,
And learn what joys abide
In things that are.
Here is the place of God,
As well this foot-worn sod
As yonder star.

Gratitude



ORE than a dream of pleasure is the life of man
on earth;
More than laughter of children, babble of
innocent mirth.

Better the long, hard pathway that leads to the shining
goal.

Better the need of courage, and better the patient soul.

There's gain we cannot measure in the loss that's bravely
borne.

There is triumph in the failure the strong man laughs
to scorn.

There's more of heart for kindness that our days are full
of care.

There is more of deep compassion that death is every-
where.

Together



HIS cozy nook and any weather,
And you, my love, and me together.

A loaf to share and a book or two,
The evening lamp and near me you.

The freest of speech and quiet laughter,
Then hours of rest together after.

The rousing dawn, the new day's greeting,
And so together the years go fleeting.

Whatever other good is given,
I make my boast that this is Heaven.

The Poet's Secret



HENCE does the poet have his song,
How has his melody found birth,
Save as his heart made pure and strong
Is joyful comrade of the earth?

He sees all things with kindly eyes,
Nor finds he cause for fear or strife.
His spirit ample as the skies
Encompasses the common life.

His friendly soul finds friendliness
Wherever chance his lot may throw ;
And his pure mind does none the less
Find purity in high and low.

And ever as he moves along
Naught that befalls him comes amiss.
Since this the secret of his song—
His inner life a poem is.

Assurance



FROM dawn to dark, a breath or two ;
A dream, a start, and night is through.

A cradle song, a grave side prayer—
And life and death our spirits share.

Which the better, or how we change,
That none can say is passing strange.

Nor do I doubt each serves us well,
Tho how or why I cannot tell.

I Am



AM.

Who more than I can say "I am"?

What to any being is greater than it is to me
to be the thing I am?

I am.

Was there in all the past, or is there now in the far
reaches of unbounded space,

A single life transcending mine in all that makes its
being dear unto itself?

I am.

Before the light of suns, or ever earth took shape,

And when existing things whirl to their doom,

I was and shall be there.

My beginning and continuance abide in the nature of
things.

I am.

Yesterday and the far to-morrow I may not grasp.

Remotest causes rising to undreamed of results per-
meate me.

I am.

Not a thing separate, nor to pass unacknowledged,

But as much to all as each or any.

I am.

Within my being wrapt and still lies vastest mystery
Which to my lonely moments whispers things I may not,
cannot tell.

I am.

And to regret or to distrust whatever thing I am,
Were to profane whatever else exists.

Heroism



He's a hero, who can stand
In solitary ways
Fronting with a courage grand
Uneventful days,
Living on when hope is gone;
Bravely toiling all alone;
Doing what must needs be done
With no thought of praise.

He's a hero, tho his name
And high endeavor,
On the great world's scroll of fame
Are written never.
In some unsuspected place,
With a real heroic grace,
Meeting failure face to face,
Undaunted ever.

Faithful Failure



SONG for the wretched outcast
Whom an angry mob condemn,
The man whose good is forgotten
In the evil thoughts of men.

A song for the lonely leader
Whose thinking outruns the day,
Who clings to his own ideal
Whatever the world may say.

A song for him who has fallen
In a cause few dared to serve,
Who knew he must fail at starting
But was not the man to swerve.
A song for the right out-voted,
The wrong made right by decree,
And men who to such mean makeshifts
Bend never the coward knee.

A song how the cruel thorn-crown,
The cross and the poison-bowl—
A song how the dungeon tortures
Are scorned by a steadfast soul.
A song how the fallen conquer,
How the seeming gain is lost,
When ages revise false values
And we learn what truth has cost.

The Beauty of the World



S down the open way I go
A thousand things are dear,
A fine companionship I know
In all I see and hear.

My mistress is the buxom wind,
I taste the breath of showers.
To me the whisp'ring leaves are kind,
And sweet the lips of flowers.

The drowsy kine turn friendly eyes,
They know me as I pass.
I find a welcome in the skies,
Another in the grass.

A kinship closer than of blood
Holds me to all the earth.
When once their use is understood
The rankest weeds have worth.

The roots of grasses by the spring
Call me to share their drink.
And mid the forest's shadowing
Birds tell me all they think.

I have not found the wide world o'er
A thing to scorn as mean,
Their beauties charm me all the more
The deeper I have seen.

I am at home with everything
And show them all my heart;
Their myriad-voiced whispering
The finest thoughts impart.

On mountain top, mid prairie's sweep,
Or near the thund'ring sea,
How friendly arms around me creep
And hold me tenderly!

An Evening Prayer



SIT upon the shore of night
And search my soul to see,
As now the day sinks from my sight,
What it has done for me:

Lives there in me to-night
More tenderness and might
Because of all that did befall to-day?
Am I a stronger man
With heart more kind, and can
I face the night with fearless sight?

Hide not from me the wrong I've done,
Nor let me be, Great Night, as one
Who is content, if I've misspent my day.

I want no joy that brings
With it the shame of things
Unmerited. But choose instead
To face the awful fact
Of what, by word or act,
Has weakened me. Oh, let me see to-night
How, from the wreck of what is past,
I may achieve at last
A life complete.

Be this my evening prayer—
That now and ever, there
May come to me no shame
Of what I tried to be.

This, This Is God



HY inmost thought, thy quenchless pure desire,
Thy dream of good to be,
Thy sense of what in life or love were best,
Thy vast awakening need,
The deepening consciousness of what completes thy life—
This, this is God.

All that the open eye delights to see,
All that, alert, the ear may revel in,
All that to taste or touch brings ecstasy,
All satisfactions: health, leisure, work and sleep,
All human joys born of the passing day—
This, this is God.

What meanings fill the hour nor breed distaste,
What sympathies make sorrow sweeter far than tearless
nights,
What high ambition quickens us to faithfulness no fail-
ure can o'ercome,
What admirations still allure us on—
This, this is God.

In life of man all heroism lost to human sight,
In world of haste and tumult brave and quiet lives,
In loneliness and want the uncomplaining heart,
In courts and palaces the kindly, simple mind,

In prison cage the outcast soul unbroken by the reck-
lessness of legal courts,
In dens of lust the heart's revolt 'gainst aught not born
of love—
This, this is God.

Whate'er is done to break whate'er enchains,
Whatever soul disdains the crowd's applause,
Whatever thought awakes the slumb'ring world tho but
to kill
Whatever thinker dare to spoil their rest,
Whatever else that serves the afterborn—
This, this is God.

The light that burns so dim so long in savage breasts,
The light howe'er at times obscured by doubt or shroud-
ed 'neath the dust of coarse neglect,
The light of which so oft the fuel is some wild prophet's
secret tears,
The light so framed about with lacquered altar-ware
'tis barely seen,
The light: the mystic light that will show all in time
we now but guess—
This, this is God.

A Day at a Time



IFE is for those who love it,
A brave and goodly thing;
But all its worth we give it,
And all its loss we bring.

We may not spurn the knowing
No day is ours for long,
And each must have its strewing
Of sorrow and of song.

Give each day all thy heart then.
Live freely in the whole.
Let glad and sad have part then,
In building up thy soul!

Oneness



AM more than the flesh that enshrouds me,
I am more than the thoughts I possess.
I am kin to the highest above me,
I am kin to the lowest no less.

And I win by my love from all being
The gift that each thing can bestow.
For as great as the sight is the seeing;
Transcending the known is to know.

As the light of the sun in the rain mist,
As the stars reflect in the sea;
So what to my wonder seems vastest
Is but a reflection from me.

And all things that my spirit revereth,
All grandeurs my heart would enshrine,
By command of the silence that heareth,
Already forever were mine.

Thou Living Christ



THOU Living Christ, the variant echoes of whose
voice the crowds repeat,
Look on this son of those who named thee
mad, refused thy word,
And scorned the daring few who gave thee faith;
Love I not thee the more for that I am content
To worship so in quiet emulation of thy deeds?

Outcast am I from all their gilded fanes
And counted lost because I cannot say "I thus and thus
believe."

So long thy truth they toss from lip to lip,
So much they murmur it to charm the ear
Enamoured of what all are pleased to say;
The honest mockery that was thy death I more esteem
Than this established worship of thy name.

Oh, how I pity those who cannot find the living Christ
In ways obscure, in daily duties so joyfully done
They grow delightful privilege, in kind, forgiving,
thoughts
That lift stained souls toward purity and peace,
In words withholden tho we burn to speak
Till after thoughts give kindlier words their place!

Fain would I gather these priest-burdened ones
Beside the open sea, or where the granite hills
Move us to pray, to where the soul of each
Finds room to grow and gain the ways of God,
To where each feels anointed but to bless,
And all forget how they themselves may yet be saved.

The Inexpressible



SOMETHING tells me thou didst waken

With the earth from ancient night,

And life's upward path hast taken

Mounting to the spirit's height.

Something says thy deep indwelling

Is the life within the sod,

And that all things are but telling,

Life is love and love is God!

All in vain I try to name thee,

Tender words and strong I speak,

And I feel thy beauty shame me,

And my words seem false and weak—

Till all words my heart refusing

Waits for wisdom more benign,

And I lose myself in musing,

Life is love and love is mine!

What thou art mind may not measure,

May not weigh nor analyze,

Yet the heart of man can treasure

What beyond his reason lies.

Nameless wonder, self-revealing,

Silence far surpassing song,

I am satisfied with feeling

Thou art love and love is strong!

In the Silence



LEARN of my soul in the silence
Wisdom no words can express.
I find I am master of forces
I had not dreamed I possess.

The beauty I see in the silence,
It robes with glory all things,
And the joy it brings to my spirit
Raises me up as on wings.

I know who I am in the silence,
Perfect assurance is mine.
I sense in the oneness of being
All that I am is divine.

From out of the silence I carry,
Making its blessing complete,
The power to see through the seeming
One life in all that I meet.

I bring from the silence my message,
And speak as it gives me voice —
My word to the uttermost creature
Is only the word, "rejoice."

The Cosmic Soul



INTO the pure and true all living things reveal
the pure and true.

Thy foot can never wander from the path
Into untrodden ways where God is not.

Only ourselves His presence hindereth,
Only our bitterness and scorn,
Our base neglect, our faithlessness.

All things but mirror back to us the hidden self.
The God hath first His place in consciousness, in con-
science too,
In every deep desire of the mind, and in the things to
which we yield our heart.
Ourselves give meaning to reality, or make it meaning-
less and bare.

The cosmic soul waits to be bodied forth in earnest,
faithful lives.
We all may give in every word and act an added con-
firmation of the truth
That in the life of man abides the power divine.

Seek not in ways remote from life to find
The truth thou leavest unheeded at thine own hearthside.
Thou canst not separate from matters gross and mean

The spirit's finest gift.
Who once hath seen the light finds everywhere its trace.

All arguments may fail, all formal creeds prove false,
Only the limping soul needs logic's crutch;
While to the pure in heart the very air breathes
And the very ground pulses with truth.
Nature and God within man's heart are one.
This inner unity remains to be interpreted in terms of
common life.
So shall the cosmic soul be perfected in us.

Credo



HIS I believe, that God is all in all,
That now we live amid divinest things;
Only our blindness shuts us from the truth
That here upon the common earth is Heaven.

We need more clearness of our inward sense,
More purity of heart, more sympathy;
More childlike joy in free abandonment
To all that beautifies the passing day—
So shall we feel how good it is to live,
To be one glad thing more exulting in the freedom of
the earth.

And I believe, there is no cause
Of evil but our own distrust and fear;
No darkness but the blindness of our heart.
There is no sin our brother may commit
That should not make more clear his need of us.
There is no sorrow, no bitter loss or shame
But calls for love.

And this is Christ, each yearning of our soul
To bless and save the meanest of mankind.

Obeying so each noble, manly thought,
We grow to God; and this, at last, will be
Our triumph over death, that we have served
The purposes of life and through our heart
Immortal love has moved upon the world.

Expectancy



HOLD my breath
And hush my very thought
In deep expectancy....

As one who inland listens to the sea,
Or with his ear to earth can tell the tread of marching
men,
Attentive I....

I feel the ages ripening into bloom,
Within the womb of time I sense the stirring of eternity;
Instinct with love I know the hour has come....





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